





THE BUILDINGS  
OF  
BISHOP GUNDULPH.



## THE BUILDINGS OF BISHOP GUNDULPH<sup>a</sup>.

---

BISHOP GUNDULPH has been long known as one of the chief architects of his day, and to have been employed by the King to build the White Tower in London: the buildings known to have been erected or superintended by him afford, therefore, the best examples of the style of his age, of the mode of construction, and of the art of building in the period which immediately followed the Norman Conquest. The history of his life clearly shews that he had every opportunity of acquiring the best information; and we may fairly conclude that he possessed all the knowledge and skill that any one possessed in his time. He was one of the most distinguished of the celebrated monks of the abbey of Bec, in Normandy, so many of whom were presented by William the Conqueror to great preferment and high rank in England. When Lanfranc was appointed abbot of the new abbey at Caen, Gundulph accompanied him, and when Lanfranc was promoted to Canterbury in 1070, Gundulph again accompanied him, and was soon appointed to the see of Rochester; but he continued to be treated by Lanfranc as his intimate friend and confidant, as their letters shew.

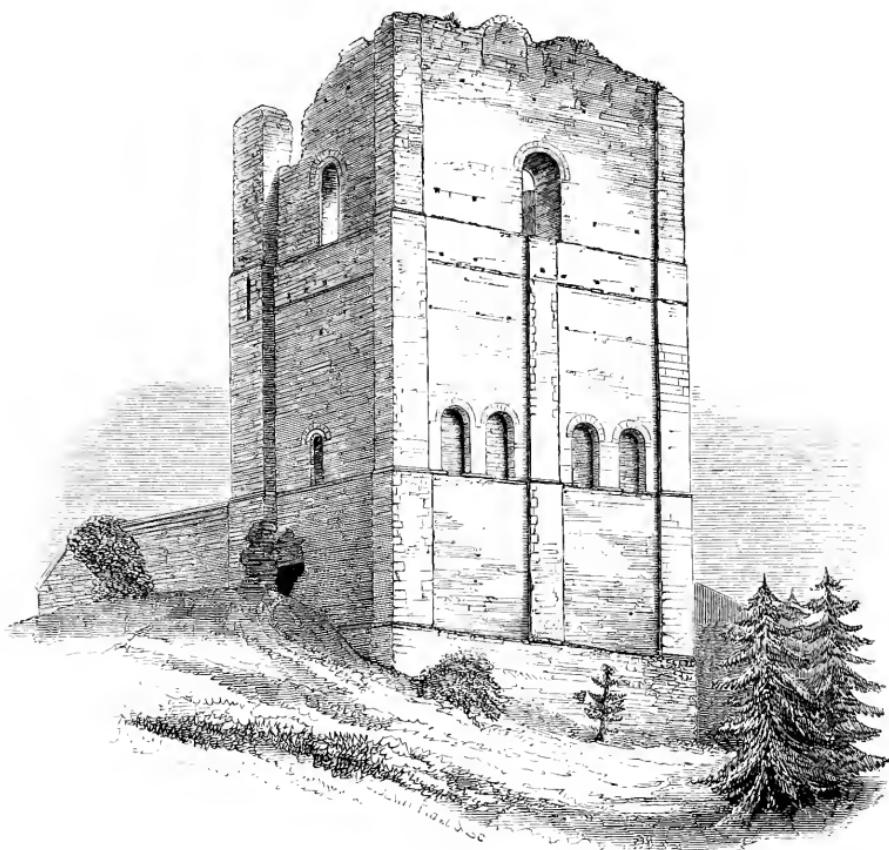
It appears evident that through the influence of Lanfranc Gundulph soon obtained an estate at Malling, now called St. Leonard's, and immediately built himself a residence there, the walls of which still remain. We have, indeed, no direct historical evidence of this, but the indirect evidence is very strong.

Soon after his monastery at Rochester was established, Archbishop Anselm, who had succeeded to Lanfranc, wrote to him, to recommend him to found a similar establishment for women

---

<sup>a</sup> A paper read at the meeting of the Archaeological Institute at Rochester, by John Henry Parker, Esq., F.S.A.

upon his own estate at Malling, because he could then look after it himself; shewing that this was his usual place of re-



1. Gundulph's Tower, or Keep, at Malling (now called St. Leonard's Tower), A.D. 1070—1080.

sidence. This advice he followed as soon as he could; and we are expressly told that “he furnished all things necessary *for the body* as well as for the soul<sup>b</sup>. ” He continued to govern this nunnery for several years by “his own special care,” and did not appoint an abbess until the year of his death.

We are expressly told, in the narrative of his life, that Malling before his time had always been “a rural place, with few inhabitants;” but after his foundation there, “people began to flock in, and build themselves houses and a street, and shops to supply the nuns<sup>c</sup>. ”

Having thus ascertained, by the best possible authority, that Malling was the usual place of residence of Bishop Guudulph,

<sup>b</sup> Vita Gundulphi, ed. Migne, col. 829.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid., col. 830.

the next question naturally is, Are there any remains of his house? Fortunately, as we have said, there are: it is perfect, except the roof and the parapet. He lived, according to the fashion of his age, in a massive Norman keep, very much upon the same plan (though smaller and earlier) with the White Tower, which he built for the King (see 6). This house, castle, keep, or tower, for it may be called by any of these names, I believe to be the very earliest Norman keep we have remaining anywhere, either in England or Normandy. It is probably the earliest building that Gundulph erected on his first arrival in England: it was necessary for him to build a secure place for himself to live in; and the character of this building is certainly earlier than that of any of the others. A bold theorist might venture to assert that Gundulph was the inventor of the Norman keep; and it would be difficult to disprove the theory by referring to one of earlier character, or known to be of earlier date. It is certain that in the Bayeux Tapestry, some of William's castles are distinctly represented as consisting of earth-works and wooden palisades only, and that at Dol the soldiers are ordered to dig a castle (*fossare castellum*). That this form of castle was of Norman origin there is no question. It goes by the name of a Norman keep or donjon all over Europe, and continued to be used or copied for several centuries as the place of security in the last resort. This form of castle, or keep, was used both in Scotland and in Ireland, and even in Italy, as late as the sixteenth century; so that it continued in use for five centuries. This one at Malling I believe to be the earliest now in existence; and it is built entirely of rubble or rough stone, with scarcely any ashlar-work about it (see 2). In the upper part of the walls of this keep there are rows of put-log holes for throwing out wooden galleries. These external galleries were on a level with the floor of the principal chamber above the vault, and there are doorways in the centre of each face, from the chamber to the gallery, for the purpose of passing out stones or other missiles to the defenders, and for ready ingress and egress. Such wooden



2. Rubble Masonry from Gundulph's Tower at Malling.

galleries were protected by a sloping roof above, and supported by wooden brackets below, the holes for all of which remain. They were protected from fire by being covered over with skins or raw hides in time of siege. Many other interesting particulars respecting these wooden galleries, scaffolds, or *hours*, will be found in the invaluable work of M. Viollet-le-Duc on Military Architecture<sup>d</sup>.

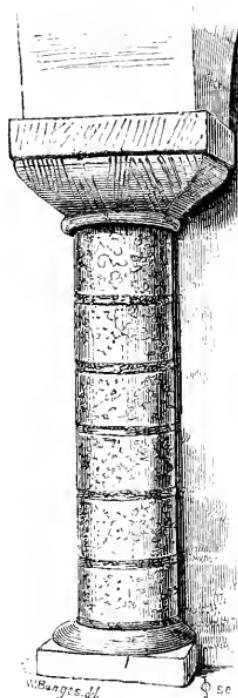
In this tower or keep at Malling the vault was of the plain barrel form, and was over the first-floor instead of over the ground-floor only, as is more usual in England; but in Scotland and Ireland it is common to have a floor of wood under

the vault, and the principal chamber above it at the top of the building, which was commonly only three stories high. The marks of the vault are here visible in the walls, as they almost always are if it has been destroyed; but such vaults very generally remain perfect; for neither time nor fire has much effect upon them, and it is a work of some considerable labour to destroy them.

Gundulph's appointment to the bishopric of Rochester took place in 1077, or eleven years after the Conquest; and he shortly afterwards began to build a new chancel for his cathedral, the old one being destroyed.

As soon as the new church was sufficiently completed, that is, as soon as the choir was ready (the *ecclesia* proper), it was consecrated by the translation of the relics of St. Paulinus from the remains of the old structure to the new one<sup>e</sup>. The only portions of this work now remaining are the early part of the crypt, underneath what is now the west end of the chancel, this part of the

3. Respond from Gundulph's Crypt at Rochester,  
A.D. 1077–1080.

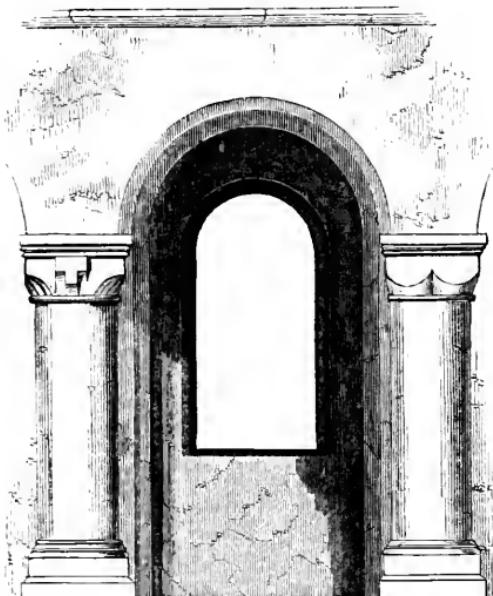


<sup>d</sup> These galleries are called by the French *hours*, a word evidently borrowed from the English "hoards," or boards, which we still retain in "hoarding," a term in every-day use in the streets of London; and it is not a French word. So many of our technical words come from the French or the Normans, that it is interesting to find an example the other way. See "Military Architecture," translated from the French of M. Viollet-le-Duc, by M. Macdermott, 8vo., 1860, pp. 41, 61, 65.

<sup>e</sup> Vita Gundulphi, ap. Wharton, Ang. Sacr., tom. ii. p. 280.

church having been greatly lengthened in the thirteenth century with the large and lofty crypt under it, eastward of the ancient crypt. No part of the present church above ground, *that is visible*, belongs to the early period ; but on the north side is a rude massive tower of rubble stone-work, which is of the same age as the crypt, and is part of the genuine work of Gundulph. His crypt consists of two bays only, and was no doubt under the original high altar of the cathedral : it is low, and the vault is groined without ribs, built of rough tufa, and plastered : the detached pillars are monoliths, of the stone of the country ; and the capitals are of the simplest and earliest kind, merely a cube, with the lower corners chamfered off,—not rounded off as is usual with the early Norman capital, commonly called the cushion capital, such as were used in the early work of Westminster, but merely sloped off. The responds against the wall are not monoliths, but are built into the wall, each of six stones beside the capital and base, with very wide joints of mortar between them (see 3). The material of these responds is *tufa*, one which in subsequent times was only used for the vaulting.

The chapel in the White Tower (see 4) is the only part of



4. Arch and Window of the Chapel in the White Tower, London, A.D. 1081.

that structure that has preserved enough of its original character for it to be compared fairly with the other buildings

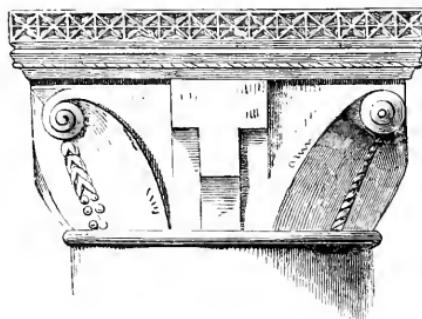
of Gundulph. This tower must have been building at the same time with the cathedral at Rochester: the date incidentally mentioned for it is 1081<sup>f</sup>; but we do not know exactly whether this refers to the commencement of the work or the consecration of the chapel. The character of the work in the White Tower is considerably more advanced than that of the tower at Malling, or that of the crypt at Rochester; but the construction of a crypt is always more rude than the superstructure, and the Chapel Royal would naturally be of the best work that was to be had at the time. Still, it is extremely simple, and of as early character as a building can well be that



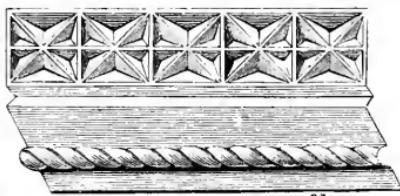
5. Masonry from the White Tower, London.

deserves the name of architecture. The walls are in part cased with the original ashlar, with wide joints (see 5); the aisles have vaults groined without ribs, the central space has a plain barrel vault, and is of very moderate width, and yet the walls are of enormous

thickness, the inner wall equally with the outer; so that this was not for defence only, but to carry the vaults which excited the apprehensions of the inexperienced workmen; and it was not until half a century afterwards that they had courage to throw a vault over a wide space. The capitals in the Royal



6. Capital from the Chapel in the White Tower, London.



Abacus and Moulding of ditto.

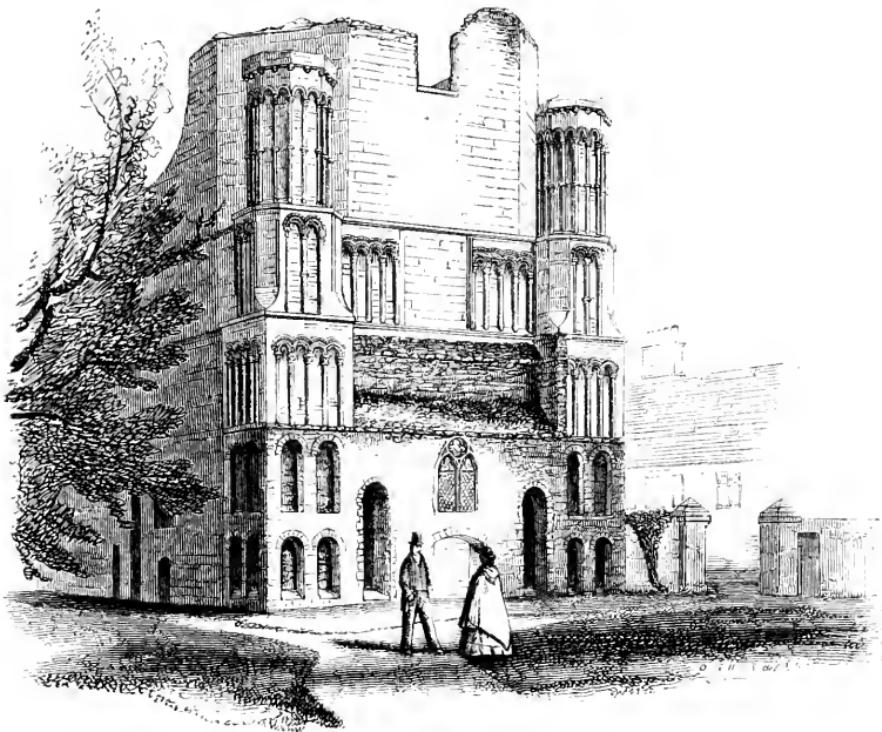
Chapel are rather more advanced and better finished than those in the crypt. One of the western capitals has had the sunk star-ornament cut upon the abacus: this has all the appear-

<sup>f</sup> See *Registrum Roffense*, p. 32; *Textus Roffensis*, p. 201.

ance of having been done afterwards, as it is within easy reach. Most of the capitals have the peculiar projection in the centre like a Tau cross (see 6), as if left for the *caulicoli* to be carved, or to be painted in imitation of them. We have evidence at Jumièges, that painting was used to assist the effect of sculpture at this period, as indeed it was long afterwards (see 4 and 6).

At the same time that this building was going on, or during the reign of the Conqueror, Gundulph also finished a monastery at Rochester for sixty monks; but none of the buildings belonging to it are extant: they were most probably of wood only,—unless the small early tower or keep, called Gundulph's Tower, on the north side of the cathedral, was the prior's house. This is probably the tower which Gundulph is recorded to have built at the cost of £60.

The exact year of the foundation of the abbey of Malling is uncertain: the editors of the *Monasticon* assign it to about

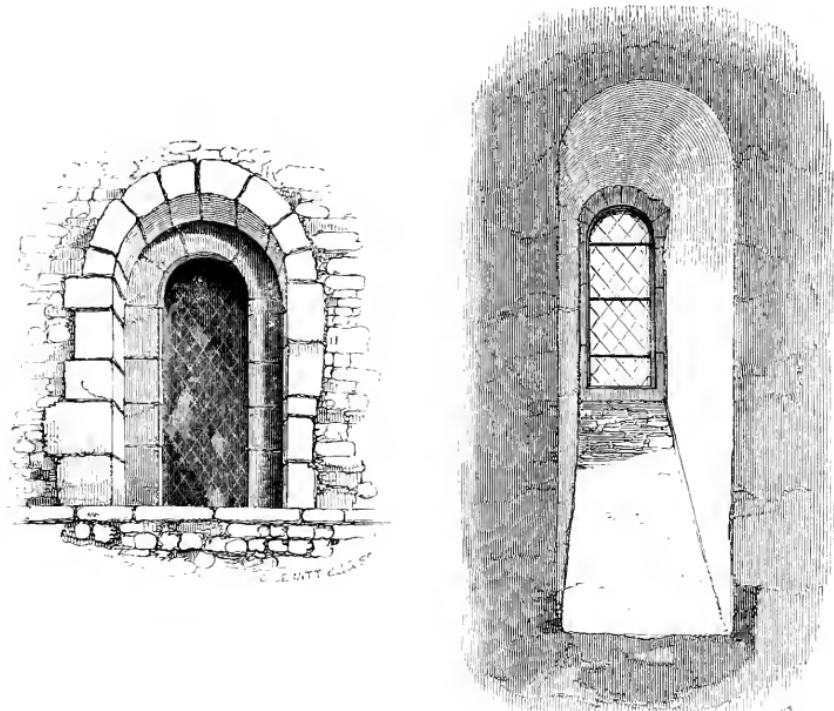


7. Malling Abbey, Kent.  
The lower part A.D. 1095—1103; the upper part c. 1150 and later.

1070; but as Anselm did not succeed to the archbishopric until 1093, and it was founded by his advice, it can hardly have

been before 1095; but Gundulph lived until 1107, and may therefore have had the entire management of it for above ten years after the foundation. Of the buildings of the abbey, we have the lower part of the west front of the church, the south transept, and some other small portion of little importance; but the upper part of the west front is of quite a different character from the lower part. There is an evident break and set-off; and the character of the upper part is forty or fifty years later than the lower part (see 7). As there was no building here before Gundulph's foundation, the earliest part must be his work; and a comparison of this with his other buildings shews that they all partake of the same rude, early character, one of the features apparently being shallow panels in the face of the wall.

Among the nine or ten churches given to Rochester Priory by Gundulph was that of Dartford, the tower of which agrees so



8. Exterior and Interior of Window of Tower, Dartford Church, Kent.

closely in character with the other buildings of Gundulph that there can be little doubt that it was built by him<sup>g</sup> (see 8, 9).

<sup>g</sup> The churches given to the Priory at Rochester by Bishop Gundulph were—Woolwich, Darentford (now called Dartford), Suthuna, Wilmiintuna, Chiselhurst,

It partakes very much of the style which is called Anglo-Saxon, and is, in fact, as rude and simple as any style can well be. But there is no good reason to suppose that the Norman Conquest made any great and sudden change of style, or that the style of building of the Normans themselves at that time was very much in advance of what we had in England. That the Normans of Caen and its neighbourhood were better masons than the English, is probable, from the excellent stone they had in abundance, very accessible in the cliffs of the river Orne,

and very easily worked. They are generally allowed to have been the best masons in Europe at that period, but the masonry of the eleventh century was everywhere very different from that of the twelfth. We have no evidence that any one of our Anglo-Saxon towers is of earlier date than the eleventh century, and they agree in character with the buildings of other countries at the same period. There is every reason to believe that the earliest stone churches that we have in England are the churches which Canute, after he became a Christian, ordered to be built of stone and lime in the places where his father and himself had burnt the (wooden) churches of the Saxons. The buildings of Bishop Gundulph, fifty years afterwards, are a little more advanced: each succeeding generation made some progress in the art of building, as in other arts; and at those periods when there was much building going on,



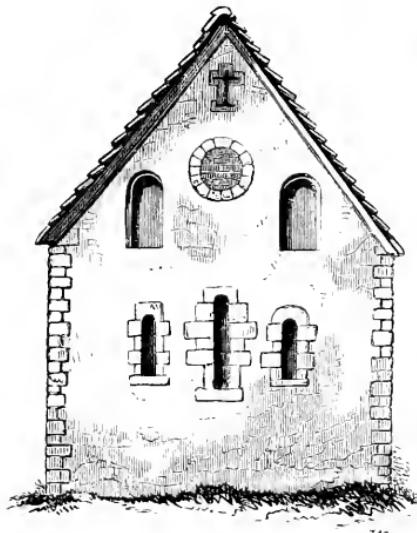
9. Doorway of Belfry Staircase,  
Dartford Church, Kent.

---

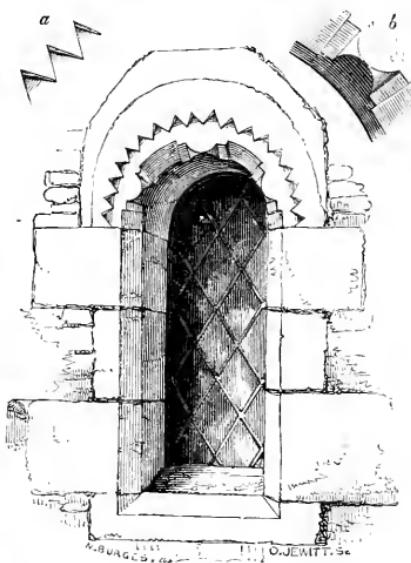
Aylesford, Rothersfield, Fernet, Sturmutha; also the altar of St. Nicolas in St. Andrew's Church, and St. Margaret's Church, at Rochester. But I believe that Dartford is the only one that retains any work of his period, at least any that is now visible. Rough walls may be of any period, and will stand for any length of time if the lime happened to be good. It is by no means improbable that the side walls of the nave of Rochester Cathedral are the work of Bishop Gundulph, although the arcades within are clearly of later date. A portion of rude masonry, very like Gundulph's other walls in Kent, was stripped of the plaster during the meeting of the Archaeological Institute.

and consequently much practice for the workmen, the progress in the art was more rapid in proportion. The end of the eleventh century and the whole of the twelfth were great building eras; and, consequently, very great and rapid progress was made in the art of building. The civil wars of that period do not seem to have had much effect in stopping building: they probably caused more castles to be built instead of churches for a time; but the mason's art continued to flourish and to improve, and that as rapidly in England as in any other country.

Another church which has been attributed to Gundulph, and which some persons imagine to be much older than his tower, is that of Darent (see 10). This is an extremely curious



10. East End of Darent Church, Kent.



11. Window, East End of Darent Church.

church, and part of it is of Early Norman character; but it does not agree with the other works of Gundulph, and it appears to me rather later, though not much. I consider it is a church built, or rebuilt, in the time of Henry I., and I can find no evidence of its being of an earlier date. I find mention, indeed, of land at Darent being given to Rochester by Brihtric and his wife about the year 1000<sup>h</sup>; and the very curious Saxon charter or deed of gift is preserved in the British Museum, and is printed by Hasted<sup>i</sup>. Among other gifts, were gold torques

<sup>h</sup> See *Mon. Ang.*, under Rochester Priory, vol. i. p. 161.

<sup>i</sup> *History of Kent*, vol. i. p. 464.

and a gold armilla or bracelet, which contained eighty marks of gold, a *handseax* which contained as much, horses and dogs, and the land called Darent (Darente) ; but there is no mention of a church. This land was afterwards exchanged with Canterbury for the manor of Lambeth, in the time of Richard I., and at that time the church of Darent is distinctly mentioned as part of the property exchanged. As Bishop Gundulph lived until 1107, or during the first seven years of the reign of Henry I., it is quite possible that this church may have been his work at the end of his life. The character of the architecture is distinctly that of the early part of the twelfth century, and not of the eleventh. The lower part of the east front with the three small windows (see 11) is the only original part of that front ; the gable has been raised and altered considerably, and all the apparent openings and shallow panels in the upper part are comparatively modern. There is a stone vault over the altar, of early character, groined without ribs, as in the aisles of the White Tower ; but the space over this in its original state was not high enough to be used for any purpose excepting to give air to the timbers of the roof, for which purpose one small window was left in the east gable.

The building art of modern Europe began in the eleventh century, and the work of each succeeding generation of men may be clearly traced. This investigation is extremely interesting : we see how each set of men improved upon the work of their fathers, little by little, more rapidly in some places than in others ; but any improvement made in one place very soon spreads to other places and other countries : no country was more than a generation in advance of others. It is evidently a mistake to attribute the discovery of any new style to any individual : a new style of architecture never was discovered or invented by any one person ; it was gradually developed by the progress of the human mind in that generation. We are accustomed to attach a great deal too much importance to the names of individual architects in the invention of a particular style, which was in fact the work of many minds. Even the Perpendicular English style, which is popularly attributed to Wykeham as the inventor, we now find, on careful investigation, to have been gradually coming in, before his time, or when he was a child. In the earlier styles the transition from one style to

another is more palpable, and consequently more generally understood; but such changes of style were always going on, more slowly at one period than another. Architecture never stood still: it was always either progressing or retrograding: as we have seen in our own days, it made a great stride forwards about twenty years ago, and continued to make steady progress for ten or fifteen years; and during the last five years it has retrograded as rapidly, since the mania for introducing foreign scraps, under the name of invention, seized upon our architects. We see from the buildings of Bishop Gundulph, the first architect of his day, from what a rude beginning the beautiful Early English Gothic was developed in the works of three generations; and therefore we need not despair that out of the present state of chaos of the styles of all ages and all countries, jumbled together, some good style of architecture will gradually be developed; but neither Mr. Scott, the Gundulph of our day, nor any other individual, can hope with any degree of success to accomplish what has never been accomplished before—the invention of a new style of architecture. The architecture of our day may hereafter be known as the architecture of the time of Mr. Scott, just as that of the end of the eleventh century is now known as the architecture of the time of Bishop Gundulph; but it bears in reality the impress of the age, not of the individual. I do not think we can fairly attribute any marked superiority to the buildings of Bishop Gundulph over those of his contemporaries at Gloucester, at Winchester, and at other places.

In calling your attention to the buildings of Bishop Gundulph, it was not at all my intention to depreciate his merits as an architect. I am ready to admit that he was the best architect of his day, as he has always borne that reputation. The rough and rude character of the buildings in Kent is greatly caused by the building material; the rough and hard stone called Kentish rag is a very untractable material. The White Tower, where he had the advantage of Caen stone, is a very superior building to any of those in Kent of the same period; and it is a fine building of its kind, well proportioned and well suited to its purpose, which is the great merit of the work of an architect. If Bishop Gundulph really was the inventor of the Norman keep, as seems probable, he was a very great architect, for he designed a building so well suited

for its purpose that the same type continued to be followed, when required by similar circumstances, for five hundred years. I know of no other architect of whom the same can be said.

My present object was, however, to shew you the exact state of the art of building in his time; and it is an important chapter in the history of architecture—our starting-point.

In saying that no *immediate* change was produced in the building art in England by the Norman Conquest, I do not mean to say that there is no difference between the Norman and Anglo-Saxon buildings, but that it took a generation to effect the change. The Norman style did not come in all at once and fully developed. The style in Normandy itself, at the time of the Conquest, was not at all what is generally supposed. We have no buildings remaining at Caen of the time of the Conquest. Of the time of the Conqueror we have<sup>k</sup>; but the twenty-one years of his reign produced a great change in the art of building in England as well as in Normandy, and the rich Norman style was gradually developed in both countries at the same time. At the time of the Conquest the Norman buildings were on a larger scale and more lofty than those of the English, and ashlar or cut stone was more used for facing their walls than in England, where the quoins and dressings only were of cut stone for a long time after the Conquest; but this depends greatly on the nature of the building material, and varies in different districts at all periods. Still, there is a marked character in the buildings of the time of Bishop Gundulph, and it is a very rude character; the great architect was not to blame for the character of the art of building in his time. If Mr. Scott himself had lived in the time of Bishop Gundulph, he would have built in the same style, and he could hardly have done more than invent the Norman keep.

The character of each succeeding age has impressed itself upon its buildings far more distinctly than that of any individual mind; and yet it is quite possible, by careful observation, to distinguish the work of an individual, after making allowance for the age, the country, and the province in which he lived, all of which will be impressed upon his architecture. For instance, we know that Lanfranc's cathedral at Canterbury, of which Gundulph was probably the architect, was

<sup>k</sup> See the Abbey Churches of Caen, GENT. MAG., March, 1863, p. 283.

entirely pulled down and rebuilt about forty years afterwards by Ernulf and Conrad. The former, who had been prior at Canterbury while the work was going on, was made abbot of Peterborough in 1107 and bishop of Rochester in 1114; and we can distinctly trace his work at Canterbury, at Peterborough, and at Rochester, as Professor Willis has long since pointed out<sup>1</sup>. It is Ernulf to whom we are really indebted for much of the Norman work of the cathedral of Rochester, as well as the remains of the chapter-house and cloister. This is the style which we commonly understand by the "Norman style," but it belongs to a later generation than that of Gundulph.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral, by Professor Willis, 8vo., 1845, pp. 17 and 87.

[Reprinted from the GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE.]







